



Virginia College of Emergency Physicians

PRESS RELEASE

DECEMBER 9, 2008

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UPDATE: LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR BOLLING COMMENTS ON NATIONAL REPORT CARD ON EMERGENCY MEDICINE

VIRGINIA IMPROVES IN SEVERAL CATEGORIES; EARNS GRADE OF C

Richmond, VA – Citing commendable disaster preparedness plans and well funded injury prevention programs, Virginia's rank moved up significantly from an overall ranking of 46 to an overall ranking of 23 on the National Report Card on the State of Emergency Medicine, which was released by the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP).

The state's score improved from a D+ in 2006 to a C, placing it above the country's overall score of C-. The new report card contains twice the measures of ACEP's first report card in 2006, as well as a new category for disaster preparedness, which makes it more comprehensive, though not directly comparable to the previous report card.

The report card found:

- The state is well prepared for a large-scale emergency, receiving a B+ in the category of disaster preparedness.
- Virginia improved in several areas on the report card, including public health education and injury prevention. Specifically, the state increased the percentage of young children who were immunized and the percentage of 65+ adults who received vaccines.
- The state also increased the number of board certified emergency physicians per 100,000 people.

"We're proud of our disaster preparedness program, which ranked among the top five states for the number of volunteer registered nurses and physicians registered in the Emergency System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals program," said Carl Wentzel, MD, president of the Virginia College of Emergency Physicians. "These improvements are, in part, the result of the hard work of the Virginia Department of Health, coordinating with other branches of the administration, state lawmakers, and Lieutenant Governor Bill Bolling."

Wentzel shared the report card with Lt. Gov. Bill Bolling.

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“As someone who has worked hard to improve the state of public health in Virginia, I am pleased that our ranking has risen significantly on this year’s report card on the state of emergency medicine,” said Bolling. “While I am proud of these accomplishments, clearly more work needs to be done to improve access to emergency care. We will continue to work with the Virginia College of Emergency Physicians and other interested stakeholders to do our best to address the continuing concerns that are raised in this report.”

Bolling has actively supported several public health initiatives. In 2006 he advocated for and participated in the “Steptember” program, a joint initiative by America On the Move and the YMCA of America to help encourage healthier living and reduce obesity. He recently launched “Your Heart is in Your Hands” initiative, a heart and cardiovascular health campaign sponsored by the National Lieutenant Governor's Association designed to promote heart health education, healthier living, increased physical activity and improved diet and nutrition. The report card measures the percentage of adults who are overweight.

Bolling also supported 2008 legislation designed to require public colleges to develop emergency plans and keep them updated, create teams to assess threats on campus and establish emergency warning systems, following the tragedy that occurred at Virginia Tech in 2007.

While Virginia improved its score in most categories, it dropped in the category of access to emergency care. Emergency rooms have become crowded with uninsured and underinsured people, but also with insured people who can’t access their regular physicians or specialists. The need for emergency care has increased, but the infrastructure that supports it has not. There are fewer emergency departments per million people since the last report was issued.

The Virginia College of Emergency Physicians is working to educate state lawmakers about the importance of protecting access to emergency care. During the 2009 General Assembly session the group will specifically discuss how important it is to the state of emergency medicine to protect the current cap on medical malpractice, while ensuring that Medicaid reimbursement rates to providers are not cut. Virginia cannot afford to make the practice of medicine any more expensive or we will threaten the strides we made in the last two years.

“The weakened economy combined with our failing health care system may result in growing numbers of people needing emergency care,” said Dr. Nick Jouriles, president of ACEP. “Emergency patients must become a top priority for health care reform. We are urging President-elect Obama and the new Congress to strengthen emergency departments, because they are a health care safety net for us all.”

The National Report Card on the State of Emergency Medicine was made possible, in part by funding from the Emergency Medicine Foundation, which gratefully acknowledges the support of the Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The Virginia College of Emergency Physicians is a state chapter of ACEP, a national medical specialty society representing emergency medicine with more than 27,000 members. ACEP is committed to advancing emergency care through continuing education, research and public education. Headquartered in Dallas, Texas, ACEP has 53 chapters representing each state, as well as Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. A Government Services Chapter represents emergency physicians employed by military branches and other government agencies.

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